

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR GLORIA MOLINA

October 19, 2004

The week of October 24 through October 30, 2004 commemorates "National Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week." Childhood lead poisoning is a major, preventable environmental health problem in the United States. Lead can be harmful to the liver, kidneys, lungs, brain, spleen, muscles, heart, and central nervous system. Even in trace amounts, children—and pregnant women especially—are susceptible to lead poisoning. The major consequences of lead poisoning in children include delayed mental development, lower I.Q., hearing impairment, development delays in speech and language, and short attention spans.

In the past, lead has been regulated in gasoline and paint, however, regulation of lead levels in candy has been lax, despite the fact that the lead certain types of candy is directly ingested by children. In fact, the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has established an allowable level of lead content in food to be 0.5 parts per million (ppm). A major source of food contaminated with lead is imported candy, which is frequently consumed by children seven years or younger. Many children consume

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large amounts of toxic lead candy daily. For that reason, there are no safe levels of lead for children. Furthermore, children in the County of Los Angeles continue to be diagnosed with elevated levels of lead in their blood.

The California Department of Health Services has issued several public health advisories warning consumers of high levels of lead in the following imported candies: Picarindo (Tamarind candy), Vero Rebanaditos, Vero Mango, Vero Elotes, Chaca Chaca, Storck Eucalyptus Menthol Candy, Dulmex brand-Bolirindo, Margarita brand-Tamrindo Pulpa, Licona Tamarind, Jarrita Chonita-Tejocote, and Brinquitos. Nonetheless, these candies are still available for sale on store shelves in the County of Los Angeles today. Proposed State legislation to regulate the safe levels of lead have failed.

To prevent the prolonged exposure of children to such potentially dangerous candies, the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, in partnership with the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention program, should be actively engaged in educating the public on the importance of lead prevention and taking steps to discourage the sale of this candy.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors declare the week of October 24 as “Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week” in Los Angeles County and encourage efforts to educate the public about the dangers of lead poisoning.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Director of Health Services, the Public Health Officer and County Counsel to:

- (1) Direct County Counsel to draft an ordinance banning the sale of candy containing toxic lead;

(2) Pending the drafting of the ordinance, direct the Public Health Officer to send a letter to grocers countywide, requesting the voluntary removal of all candy containing lead;

(3) Complete random testing of candies that are known by the FDA to exhibit exceptionally high levels of lead and publicize the results;

(4) Distribute educational posters to schools, child care providers, Emergency Rooms and Health Centers, WIC centers, in high-risk areas; and

(5) Outreach to schools by providing information to parents and developing a curriculum on the health effects of lead in candy.